

Revealing resilience: Exploring people's reluctance to share personal stories of resilience

Lishi Tan¹, Övül Sezer², Shankha Basu¹

¹ University of Leeds; ² Cornell University

INTRODUCTION

People often show extraordinary resilience in their lives – they overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. In the present work, we find that observers judge agents who share stories of resilience more positively than those who don't. However, we also find that people are unwilling to share their stories of resilience despite recommending others to do so. Mediation analyses show that a belief that observers will question people's motive of sharing (but not the story itself) underlies this effect. Finally, we show that, perceived level of trust in one's organization influences how willing employees are to share their stories of resilience at their workplace.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Do people judge those who share personal stories of resilience positively?
- 2) Are people willing to share their personal stories of resilience vs recommending others to share?
- 3) What drives people's willingness/unwillingness to share their personal stories of resilience?
- 4) What external factor influences people's willingness to share their personal stories of resilience?

METHODS (I)

Study 1:

- Control ($N=100$), Story with resilience ($N=100$), Story without resilience ($N=100$)

- Participants took the role of a hiring manager and read a social media post by the candidate (according to their randomly assigned condition)

Example story with resilience:

"Being the youngest out of 3 children of a single mom, life hasn't been easy. We didn't have much growing up. Sometimes our electricity and water were cut off...I remember my friends having piano classes and other enrichment classes, while I couldn't have any...While in college, I had to work 2 part-time jobs. It wasn't easy but I've now graduated from XXX! I can't be more thankful. Things may be tough but I persisted and I managed to overcome the challenges in my life."

DV: Evaluation of job candidate

- 1) Warmth and Competence (Fiske et al., 2002)
- 2) Overall impression
- 3) Likelihood to recruit candidate

METHODS (II)

Study 2a and 2b (replication of 2a; pre-registered):

- Self ($N_1=150$, $N_2=103$) vs Other ($N_1=150$, $N_2=100$)
- Participants asked to imagine that they/Sam (self/other condition) found a new job and wanted to share this news on their social media. They then read a draft post.
- Difference between Studies 2a and 2b: In 2a, there's no personal control over the author's difficult life circumstances but there is in 2b.
- DVs: 1) "How likely will you go ahead/recommend Sam to go ahead and post the story above on your/his social media?"
- 2) Participants presented with a simple alternative post



Started New Job at XXX.Inc

: "What are you more likely to do/recommend Sam to do?" (higher value = simple alternative post)

Study 3 (pre-registered):

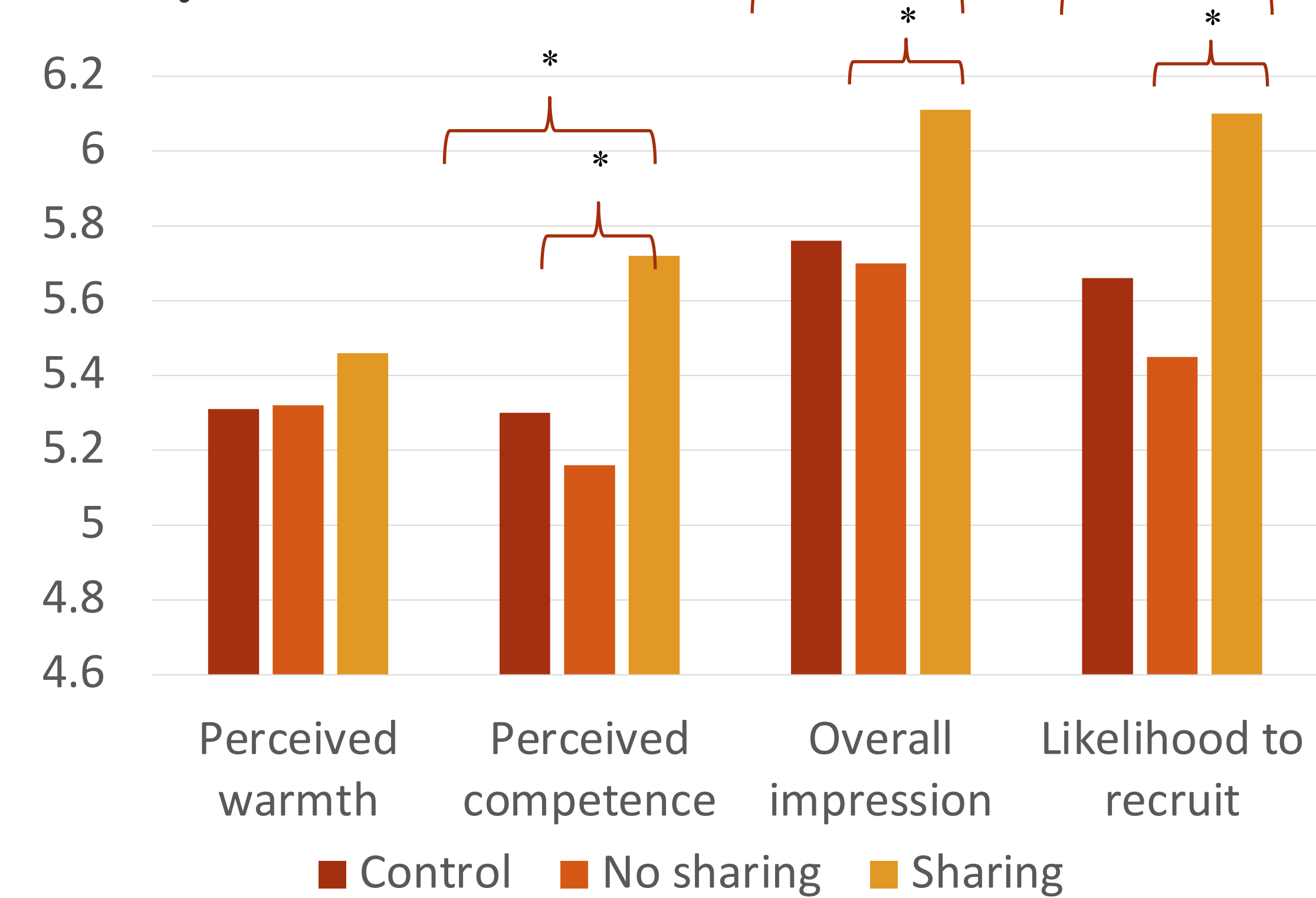
- Self ($N=103$) vs Other ($N=100$)
- Procedure: Same as Study 2a
- DVs: Same as Study 2a
- Possible mediators: 1) Doubt about the story itself: "People will think the difficulty you/Sam faced was not as bad as it seems"
- 2) Doubt about the motive: "People will question your/Sam's intention for sharing this story about your/his life"

Study 4 (pre-registered):

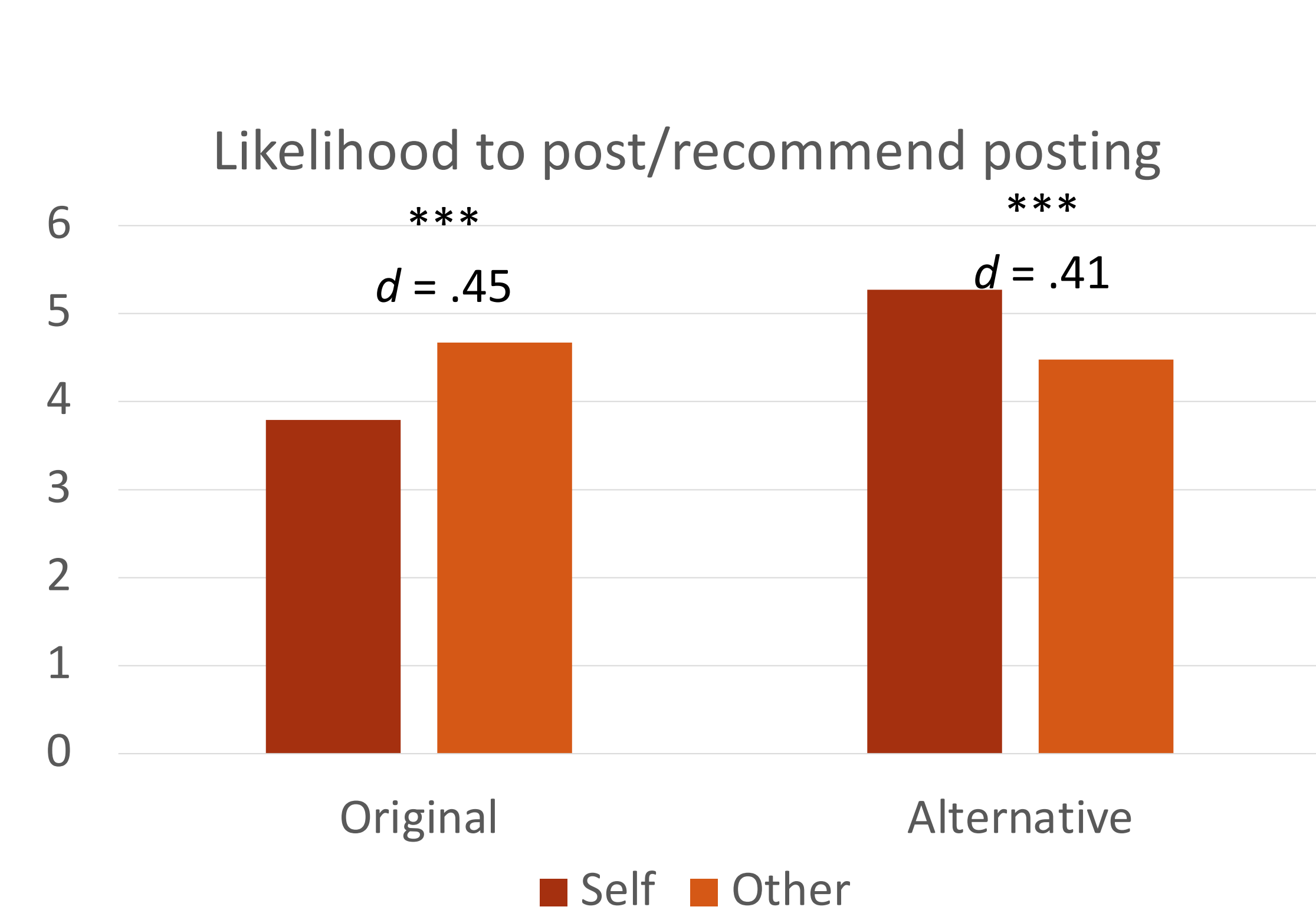
- High organizational trust ($N=100$) vs Low organizational trust ($N=100$)
- Participants were told that they just joined a new company. A survey was recently conducted among its employees about the company.
- Participants were shown an example of the survey which contains questions about organizational trust.
- In the high(low) trust condition, participants read that most(only a small portion) of the employees rated agree or highly agree to questions about their trust in the organization.
- All participants then read the same story and answer the same questions as in Study 2b.

RESULTS (I)

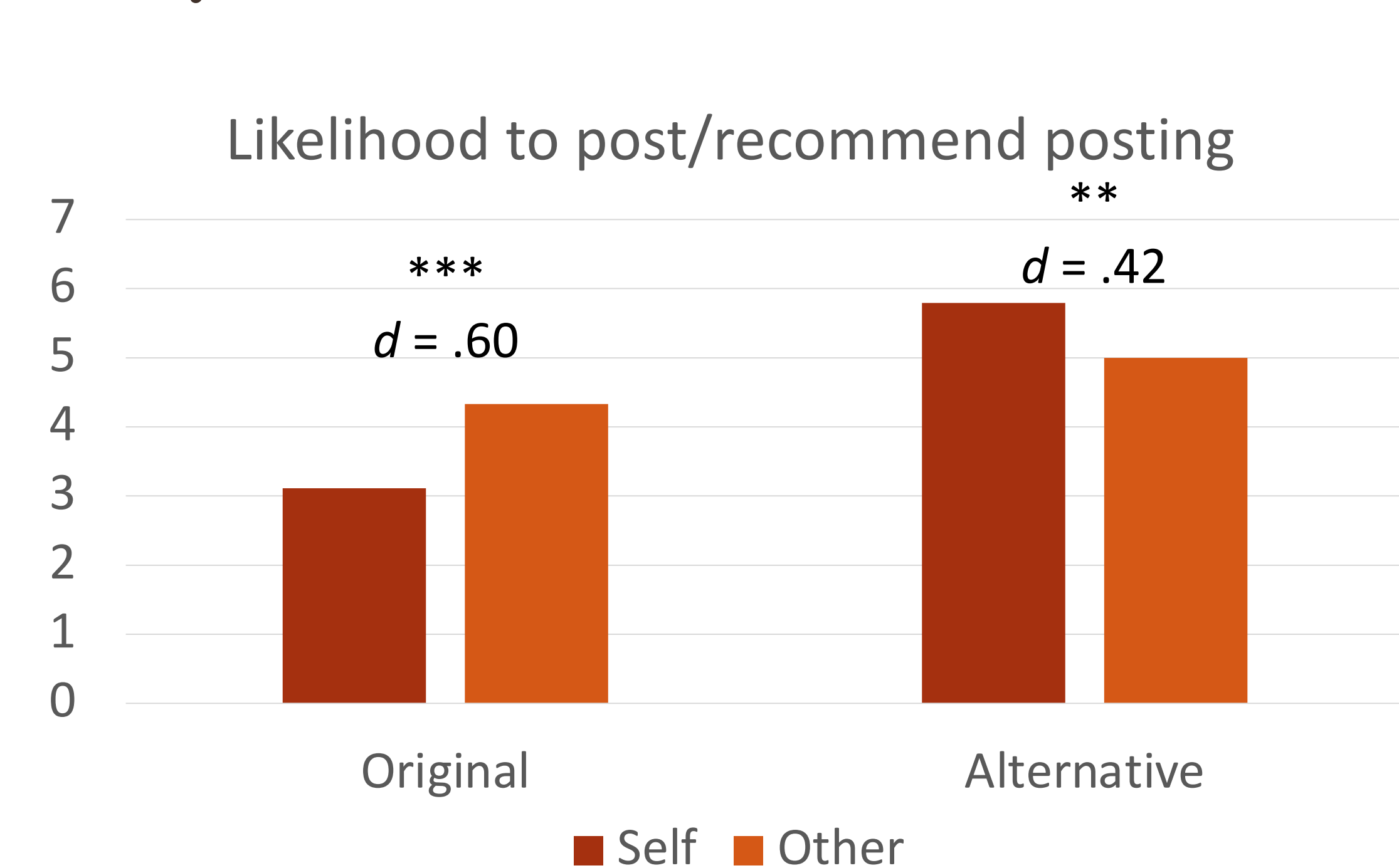
Study 1



Study 2a

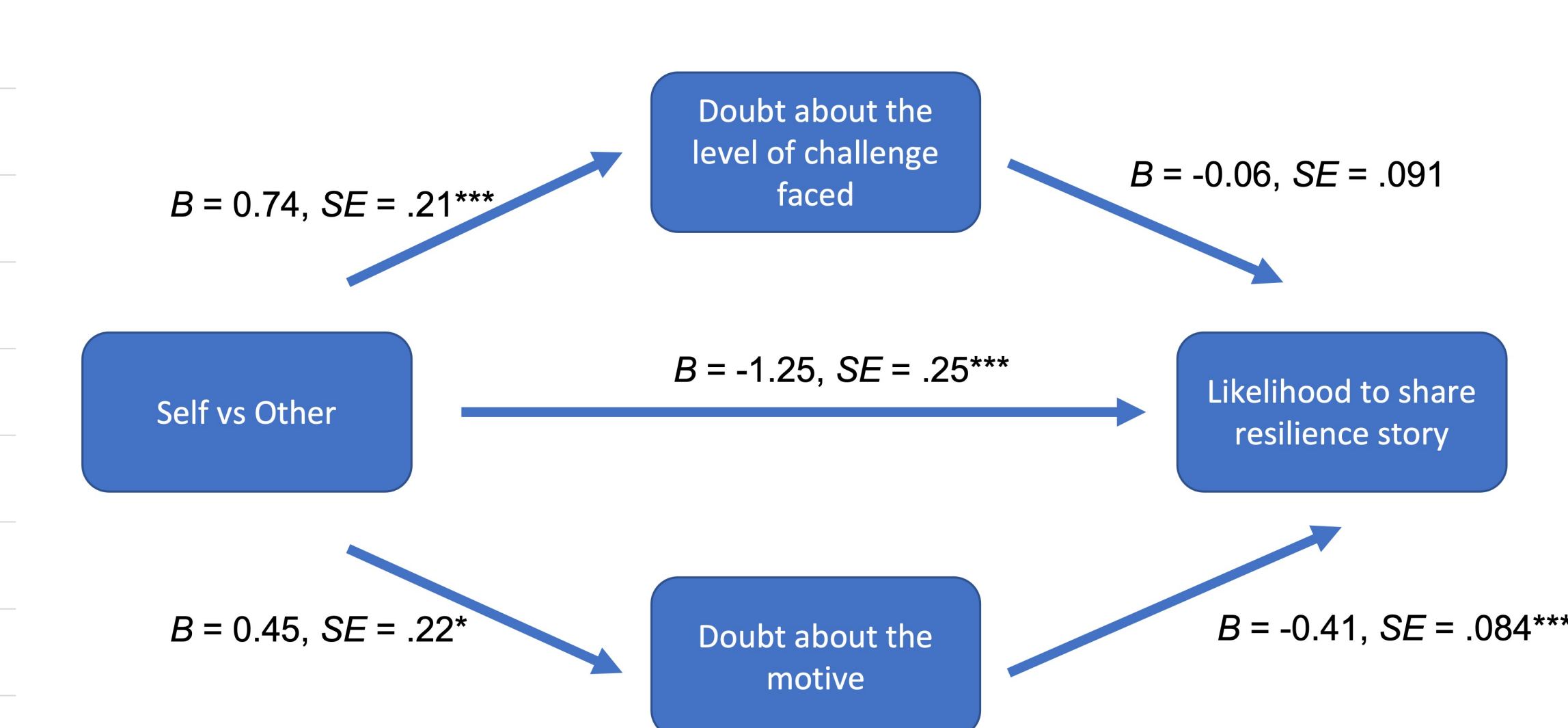


Study 2b



RESULTS (II)

Study 3



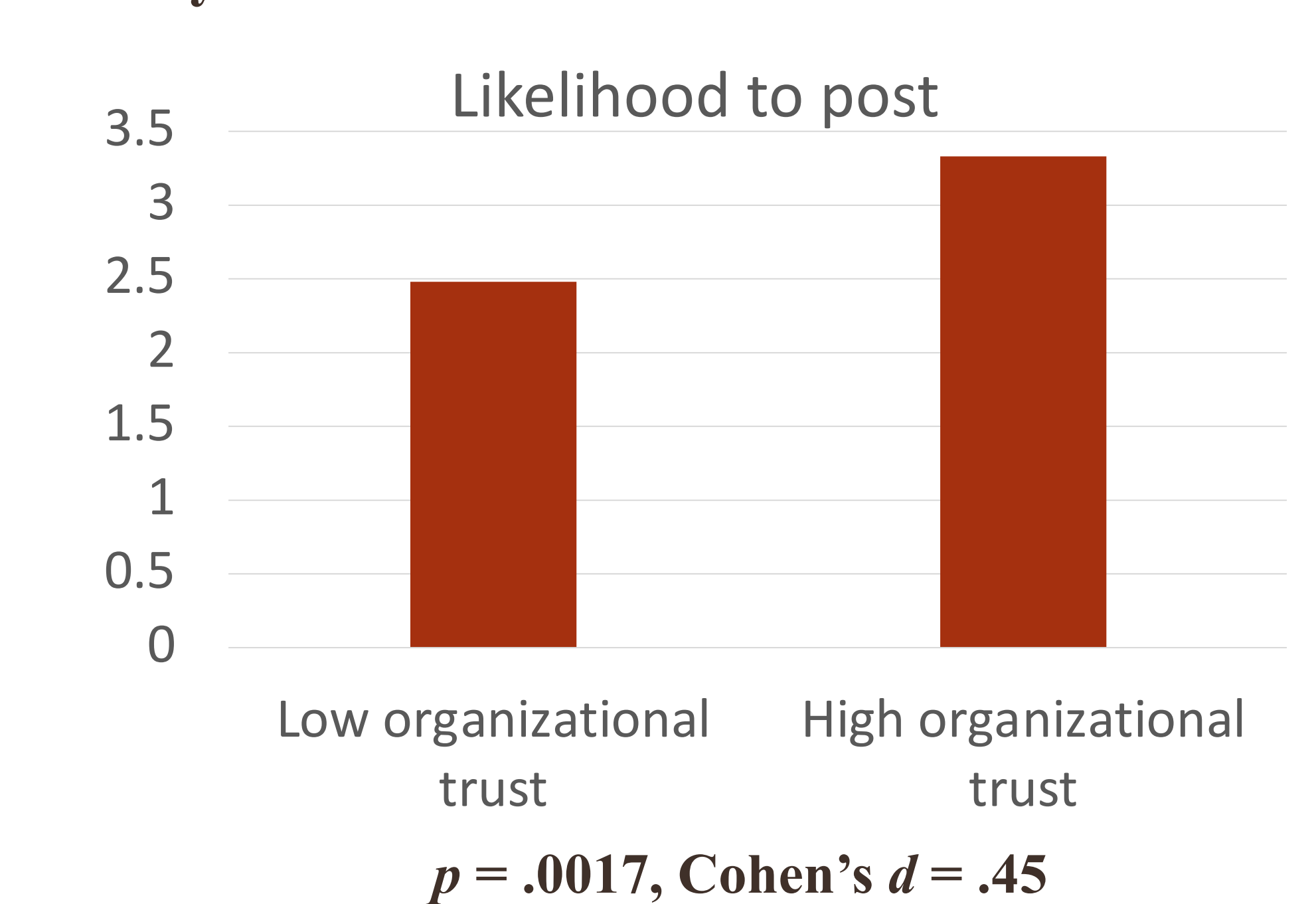
Indirect effect through doubt about story:

$B = -0.04 [-0.20, 0.091]$

Indirect effect through doubt about motive:

$B = -0.18 [-0.42, -0.0012]$

Study 4



CONCLUSION

- People evaluate those who share their personal story of resilience positively (more than those who don't share personal story or share a personal story but without resilience)
- Yet, people are not willing to share their own personal story (although they recommend others to do so)
- The unwillingness is driven by people's belief that others will doubt their motive of sharing their story (but not doubt the story itself)
- Perceiving low organizational trust further discourages them in sharing personal story of resilience

REFERENCES

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878–902.